

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

WEDNESDAY 8 JUNE 2016

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Mahmood (Chairman)
Gbola Adeleke
Banks
Mrs Bassadone
Conway
P Hearn
Link
Fethney
Imarni (Vice-Chairman)
Silwal
Timmis
W Wyatt-Lowe

Officers:

Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director - Housing
Lindsay Walsh	Responsible Officer
Julie Still	Group Manager - Resident Services
Richard Baker	Group Manager - Financial Services
Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer

Also Attendance: Councillor Griffiths (Portfolio Holder for Housing) and Councillor Harden (Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 16 March 2016 were agreed by Members.

21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies received.

22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

23 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

24 **CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

None.

25 **QUARTER 4 BUDGET MONITORING FINANCIAL REPORT**

R Baker presented the provisional outturn for 2015-2016 the final report will be presented in July. Full details are in the report.

R Baker was happy to take question.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe asked if we could provide a flow diagram for the right to buy for the money coming in and going out and the timings for it.

R Baker confirmed he will do that.

Cllr Bassadone referred to the over spend in asbestos page14 – 5.7.

E Brookes said they did more repairs than anticipated it's a knock on effect from the repair work.

Cllr Bassadone asked if it's mainly from old boilers being replaced, is this when you find asbestos?

E Brooks said the asbestos can be anywhere and its only picked up when we repair/replace old things. But yes a lot has come from old boilers.

Cllr Adeleke refereed to page 14 responsive repair overspends, what's in place to stop people abusing the system.

E Brooks said currently there isn't anything in place to stop people abusing the system.

We have a Tenancy Team working on this and highlighted are the top 200 properties that have recurrent repairs, this is where a lot of the overspend is.

We are looking at tenancy incentives to stop re reoccurring repairs we are also looking at whether the repairs is urgent or a health and safety issue.

Cllr Harden arrived at 7:40pm

Cllr Adeleke asked if we have legal powers to deal with this.

E Brooks replied, they can say no and gave an example of when they had said no due to abusive behaviour from a tenant and removed them from the planned works programme.

This needs to be used more often and publicised more to tenants.

Cllr Fethney referred to page 14 mould, some cases of mould are dangerous do you liaise to find out what's urgent/not urgent or dangerous.

E Brooks said we have experts and the contractors are aware what is urgent and what isn't. Contractors and staff have had training sessions so they are more knowledgeable on this.

L Walsh added to that explaining the new procedure and how they are working with Osborne. Osborne will be working with tenants; they will be monitoring tenant's lifestyle and visiting tenants and teaching them how to prevent mould.

E Brooks said that Andy Vincent and Fiona Williamson have put in a bid for a re Charge Officer to re charge tenants if their property is not up to a lettable standards when handing their property back.

The bid has gone in and it will be for a trial period for a year.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 19 charges, is it difficulty collecting the money.

R Baker will get back to him about this.

Cllr Mahmood asked R Baker what his view is on the budget so far.

R Baker said he is confident that it's a robust process going forward and the rates of repairs are being monitored.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

26 QUARTER 4 HOUSING REPORT

E Brooks presented the 2015/16 end of year report and highlighted a few things these are highlighted 1-6 in the report.

Cllr Adeleke referred to the refugees whom E Brooks spoke about, he was a bit weary in presenting this information to the residents as he wanted to ensure their arrival is more positive rather than negative.

E Brooks said its about getting the balance correct. He would prefer that it's kept on a low key. There is information on the Councils website but its kept to a minimum and asks people to contact us directly if they want to know more. We are only taking 10 families in the next 5 years.

Cllr Griffith added to that saying the Home Office are pressing for more, we are only doing as we have been instructed we don't need to publicise it, families have been through a lot. If families want to speak about it when they are settled then that's something that can be done.

E Brooks said they attend regular meetings about the refugees and they learn from other authorities.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to PP07 on page 24 examples to consider. A resident had agreed for décor to be done after they moved in, this then didn't happen, is there a time scale on these works and does this happen a lot where we don't keep to our word?

E Brooks said it's not a normal request and explained the process. If work isn't done then it's not a lettable standard so there are questions on how this passed. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe to pass information to E Brooks to look at.

Cllr Mahmood said that they tenant involvement team try and meet each month before the H&C OSC, they will meet and discuss the new strategy when is this likely to be ready.

E Brooks said it's in draft format it will go to the TLC and H&C OSC in July.

Cllr Adeleke said page 25 the estimate for the year doesn't make sense.

E Brooks clarified what it meant.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

27 QUARTER 4 RESIDENT SERVICES

J Still presented this report and the key indicators; we are currently in the same position as last year.

J Still spoke about the following,

- violent crime increasing
- ASB
- 3 premises closure due to class A drugs.
- Adeyfields successful event and the upcoming events for the Queen's Birthday.
- 340 new spaces provided under verge hardening project and a list for the current year is being developed.
- Adventure playgrounds increase in numbers
- CCTV 30% increase incidents leading to increased provision of evidence for Police prosecutions.
- The Old Town Hall attendance figures were good at 74%.

J Still was happy to take questions on the report.

P Hearn congratulated and thanked the department for their hard work. She also asked if we could have someone from youth connexions to come and tell us what they do in the borough.

N Harden added that youth connexions are a country service not just in the borough, but it would be good to find out what they do.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said that he loved the Adeyfield Love Your Neighbourhood event and asked who they can find out how effective they are.

J Still said that they do follow it up and it makes a difference to a small number of people and gave some examples of story from residents.

N Harden added that it's long term effects and it's all about being proactive.

Cllr Timmis asked why ASB has risen.

J Still said its been falling in the last 15 years, we knew that at some point it would rise and that's what's happened in the last 12 month, she explained what it was due to and since Christmas there has been a change it figures.

Cllr Timmis asked if the drug issue was to do with school children.

J Still advised that there were small pockets where school children were targeted by in general it was across the board.

Cllr Adeleke refereed to page 55, The Old Town Hall, he attended all the events and they were excellent. He asked if they were one offs or if they would be shown again.

J Still confirmed that some are annual events and some are weekly. J Still offered to bring a report to committee in the Autumn about the Old Town Hall and the new marketing strategy and website. This was agreed by the committee for the Autumn

Cllr Mahmood expressed his concerns about crime figures, is it a police matter as it's not good presence for the area, who takes this issue further? J Still offered to bring a report to this committee in the Autumn and this was accepted by the committee.

J Still explained the process of CSP meeting regularly; it's a case where criminals can move in and out of the area causing peaks..

Action: None.

Outcome: Report was noted.

28 HOUSING ACQUISITION POLICY

E Brooks presented this report explaining the decision making process which will consider whether each opportunity adds sufficient value to merit the required capital investment, based on the current service plan objectives and the future strategic development plans.

E Brooks explained that purchasing back old council houses is very unlikely. We can build cheaper than what we can buy back. Simon Smith is the Manager publishing the policy and the policy explains the financial side, we don't have money sitting there to buy land.

E Brooks was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr Bassadone asked if we were to buy a property back would we then re house them?

E Brooks replied no.

Cllr Mahmood said the policy is not clear if someone sells a home.

E Brooks said that the criteria in the policy will be made clearer before it goes to Cabinet.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted

29 HOUSING & PLANNING BILL UPDATE - IMPLICATIONS FOR DBC HOUSING DEPARTMENT

L Walsh presented this report and explained that it has now become an Act. It only covers issues from social landlords, it's called pay to stay and it's compulsory. An additional timetable will be added and the process will start April 2017. One of the key things is if you exchange your property you will lose your lifetime tenancy.

L Walsh was happy to take questions.

Cllr Griffith asked if this stops people moving in EPD.

L Walsh said at the moment it does apply, it's not yet been an issue.

E Brooks added the remit affects our council, over the next few months we will draw an action plan for all issues. We will bring back an appendix to show you what's going on.

Cllr Link asked if we send letters to all tenants.

L Walsh said yes we will, we need to know what tenants rents are in order to charge them.

Cllr Link said that there is no incentive for the tenants to downsize.

Cllr Fethney asked if we are resourced up enough for this.

E Brooks added that the MP is due to see the TLC Group to answer questions on Pay to Stay. At the moment we can't answer this, we will feedback after the meeting.

J Howard asked if we had the correct figures as these are not what he had seen.

E Brooks confirmed that these are correct ones the figures which John had, those figures were refused in The House of Lords.

Cllr Imarni referred to page 13, has there been a policy change where people have decided to buy?

E Brooks confirmed that 3 years ago there was a spike and it just hasn't gone down, he is confident that the pay to stay will encourage people to buy.

Action: None

Outcome: The Report was noted.

30 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Agreed

31 **WORK PROGRAMME OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2016-2017**

Agreed

The Meeting ended at 8.10 pm